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Forests: progress, challenges and the way forward for the international arrangement on forests

Report on the second meeting of the Open-ended Intergovernmental Ad Hoc Expert Group on the International Arrangement on Forests

Summary

Pursuant to paragraph 8 of United Nations Forum on Forests resolution 10/2, the Open-ended Intergovernmental Ad Hoc Expert Group on the International Arrangement on Forests has held two meetings to propose recommendations on the future of the arrangement to the Forum at its eleventh session. The first meeting was held in Nairobi from 24 to 28 February 2014 and the second in New York from 12 to 16 January 2015. The present report will be submitted to the Forum at its eleventh session, to be held in New York from 4 to 15 May 2015.

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I. Background

1. In paragraph 8 of its resolution 10/2, the United Nations Forum on Forests decided to establish the Open-ended Intergovernmental Ad Hoc Expert Group on the International Arrangement on Forests. As set out in paragraph 10 of the annex to that resolution, the Expert Group shall provide advice and input, in support of the mandate of the Forum at its eleventh session, on: (a) the international arrangement on forests, the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests and the contribution of forests to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals; (b) the review of the performance and effectiveness of the arrangement; (c) an assessment of the implementation of the instrument and the achievement of the four global objectives on forests; and (d) a full range of options for the future of the arrangement for consideration by the Forum at its eleventh session.

II. Organizational and other matters

A. Venue and duration of the meeting

2. The second meeting of the Open-ended Intergovernmental Ad Hoc Expert Group on the International Arrangement on Forests was held in New York from 12 to 16 January 2015.

B. Opening of the meeting

3. The meeting was opened by the Co-Chairs, namely Charles Barber (United States of America) and Raymond Landveld (Suriname). In welcoming experts, the Co-Chairs highlighted the need for the Expert Group to identify feasible, efficient and politically viable actions and options for the post-2015 international arrangement on forests and to provide views on elements to be included in the resolution on the future of the arrangement to be adopted at the eleventh session.

4. On behalf of Noel Nelson Messone, the Chair of the Forum at its eleventh session, Marianne Odette Bibalou (Gabon), reiterated the importance of securing a solid outcome that would help ensure full recognition of the role of forests in the post-2015 development agenda and in future climate change discussions.

5. In his opening remarks, the Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, noted that the Forum, as the only universal, intergovernmental policy forum on forests, was in a unique position to monitor progress in the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda in so far as it related to forests and to ensure the achievement of forest-related sustainable development goals and targets.

6. In his opening statement, the Director of the Forum secretariat said that the effectiveness of the Forum would increase significantly if it had the means to assist Member States and stakeholders in accessing financing to implement the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests.

C. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters

7. The Expert Group adopted the agenda of its second meeting (E/CN.18/AEG/2015/1) and the programme of work. It was noted that there would be no negotiated outcome, that the Co-Chairs would prepare a summary of the discussions (see annex) and that the documents for the session were also available on the Forum website.

D. Tasks of the Expert Group

8. In carrying out its tasks, the Expert Group was guided by Forum resolution 10/2, by which it was mandated with reviewing the performance and effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests within the context of Economic and Social Council resolutions 2000/35 and 2006/49 and the attainment of the multi-year programme of work of the Forum for the period 2007-2015. The Expert Group was expected to review all inputs, including the outcome of its first meeting, the outcome of the independent assessment of the arrangement, and the second round of stakeholders' views and proposals on the arrangement. It was also expected to take into account the connection between the arrangement, the sustainable development goals and the post-2015 development agenda. On the basis of this review, the Expert Group was to propose a set of recommendations for consideration by the Forum at its eleventh session that provided a strategic direction on the function and institutional arrangements of the arrangement for the period beyond 2015.

9. The Co-Chairs invited the co-facilitators of the independent assessment of the international arrangement on forests, Hans Hoogeveen (Netherlands) and Saiful Abdullah (Malaysia), to introduce the report on the assessment. A discussion ensued, during which the consultants who had prepared the report, namely Juergen Blaser (Switzerland), Mafa Chipeta (Malawi), Jorge Illueca (Panama), Maxim Lobovikov (Russian Federation) and Ricardo Umali (Philippines), responded to questions from experts.

10. Wu Zhimin (China) and Peter Besseau (Canada) summarized the outcome of a country-led initiative entitled "Workshop on the international arrangement on forests beyond 2015", held in Beijing from 29 to 31 October 2014.

11. The Director of the Forum secretariat provided an update on the post-2015 development agenda process.

12. On 14 January, a representative of the Division for Sustainable Development of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and a representative of the UN-Water secretariat outlined the role and modalities of UN-Water and responded to questions from experts.

13. Also on 14 January, the Assistant Director General and Head of the Forestry Department of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, who is also Chair of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, gave a presentation on the views of the members of the Partnership on the future of the international arrangement on forests.

E. Other matters

14. On 16 January, the Forum secretariat launched the new and interactive facilitative process website as an online platform for accessing and advertising information on all sources of forest financing, noting that experts had highlighted the importance of the facilitative process and the success of its project on small island developing States and low-forest-cover countries in generating a common forest financing strategy and furthering regional and South-South cooperation.

15. Experts highlighted a number of forthcoming meetings that would provide additional inputs to the Forum at its eleventh session, including a country-led initiative on governing forest landscapes and lessons learned from 10 years of experience and the way forward after 2015, to be held in Interlaken, Switzerland, from 3 to 6 February 2015, and a major groups-led initiative on designing vehicles for securing the means to implement sustainable forest management, to be held in Kathmandu from 2 to 6 March 2015.

16. An expert from Switzerland said that she was facilitating the work of an informal group that was examining the proposed sustainable development goals and targets and their relationship to the global objectives on forests. She invited other experts to contact her if they wished to participate.

F. Attendance and participation

17. The meeting was attended by 135 government-designated experts from 79 countries, by 27 other experts designated by member organizations of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, other international and regional organizations, regional processes and major groups and by independent experts. A full list of participants will be included in a separate document and posted on the Forum website.

III. Outcome and closing of the second meeting of the Expert Group

18. The Expert Group took note of the outcome of its second meeting, including the summary by the Co-Chairs annexed to the present report. The report, which was adopted by the Expert Group at its closing plenary session, on 16 January 2015, will be transmitted to the Forum at its eleventh session.

Annex

Summary by the Co-Chairs and recommendations

I. Introduction

1. While the participating experts agreed on a number of topics, as noted below, however, there were issues on which further discussion was required to explore ways in which differences might be narrowed. Some experts noted that the international arrangement on forests had some shortcomings, such as inadequate implementation and inadequate linkages and coherence with other global forest-related policy forums, and that these needed to be addressed.

II. Opening session

2. Key messages from the opening statements included the following:

(a) An unprecedented and positive basis existed for shaping a solid international arrangement on forests in the period beyond 2015 at the eleventh session of the Forum;

(b) The intersessional activities had highlighted that countries had more in common on the way forward with regard to the arrangement in the period beyond 2015 than at any time before;

(c) The pace of development at the international level was such that it was more conducive than ever before to integrating forests into other major processes;

(d) Strong outcomes on the future of the arrangement from the second meeting of the Open-ended Intergovernmental Ad Hoc Expert Group and the eleventh session of the Forum would lead to forests occupying a more prominent place on both the post-2015 development agenda and the new climate change agenda;

(e) It must be kept in mind that the resolution to be adopted at the eleventh session of the Forum should provide a framework of agreements on the design, function and future direction of all the components of the arrangement;

(f) Further consultations aimed at reaching agreement on details could be held in the intersessional period, after the summit to be held in September 2015 and the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Paris in December 2015, to ensure full coherence with the post-2015 development agenda and the new climate change agreement;

(g) It was important to integrate forests into the sustainable development goals, in particular because doing so defined a role for the forestry sector and related communities in implementing sustainable development around the world;

(h) The Forum, as the only universal, intergovernmental policy forum on forests, was in a unique position to monitor progress in the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda in so far as it related to forests and to ensure the achievement of forest-related sustainable development goals and targets in the post-2015 development agenda;

(i) Whatever form the arrangement took in the future, it should have a strengthened role in advancing the implementation of sustainable forest management and in facilitating access to existing forest-related funds, in particular the Global Environment Facility and the Green Climate Fund.

III. Independent assessment of the international arrangement on forests

3. After the presentation on the report of the independent assessment of the international arrangement on forests, the following points were made:[a]

(a) Because the team of consultants carrying out the independent assessment was tasked with thinking outside the box, the options presented by the team reflected creative conceptual approaches to addressing needs and gaps. Depending on which options, or which elements of the options, resonated with countries, operational issues could then be explored;

(b) The team's premise was that forest institutional governance at the global level was fragmented, and that this situation was mirrored at the national level, where different ministries and agencies had responsibilities for different aspects of forests;

(c) The team originally considered 10 options for the arrangement in the post-2015 period, four of which[b] were selected because they were all based within the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat and because they were the most feasible and closest to the current arrangement (the other options required another organization to agree on a mandate to pursue the option, which might not have been realistic);

(d) The concept of "stewardship" meant having the range of forest-related organizations and stakeholders working together under the umbrella of the arrangement;

(e) The most difficult option to operationalize was option 2, which included the establishment of a new intergovernmental body modelled after such entities as UN-Water, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change or the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services and in accordance with which existing bodies and organizations would continue to have their own forest-related mandates;

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[a] Available from http://www.un.org/esa/forests/pdf/iaf/IAF-Assessement%20Report-Final-12%20Sep-2014.pdf.

[b] Option 1 would consist of an enhanced international arrangement on forests that calls for the updating of the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests, the establishment of a United Nations forest assembly to replace the Forum and of regional forums, the creation of an entity to be known as "UN-Forests" as a science-policy interface, the appointment of a special envoy on forests, the development of United Nations trust funds (including the strategic trust fund) and the strengthening of the secretariat; option 2 would mean incorporating many elements of option 1 and further developing the concept of "UN-Forests" as a new institution or mechanism; option 3 would build on option 1 by offering individual Member States the option of making legally binding commitments to sustainable forest management by having a parallel political track; and option 4 would be a variant on option 3 that includes regional-level legally binding agreements.

(f) Option 1 had the least barriers to implementation, and there were precedents for the approaches reflected in options 3 and 4;

(g) The dual tracks under option 3 would be expected to have the same objectives and a shared overall strategy or strategic plan;

(h) The team of consultants clarified that the role of the special envoy proposed in the assessment would be to strengthen political commitment, raise the profile of the arrangement within the United Nations and promote coordination on forests within the United Nations system and among partners;

(i) It would be useful to hold a presentation on the independent assessment report at the eleventh session of the Forum.

IV. Views and proposals on the international arrangement on forests

4. During a discussion about the views and proposals on the international arrangement on forests that had been submitted by countries and other stakeholders, general points were raised about the following:

(a) The importance of obtaining financing for the implementation of sustainable forest management and the need for increased coordination with both United Nations and non-United Nations agencies and entities in this regard;

(b) The need for policy dialogue and implementation relating to governance at multiple levels to be supportive of national actions;

(c) The need to reach agreement on the objectives, functions and principles of the future of the arrangement and for "form to follow function"; it was important to clarify the functions and mandate that the arrangement and its components would have in the future, and to specify the value added by the arrangement;

(d) The question of the degree to which the Forum should position itself as a multi-stakeholder forum, given both its strengths and the constraints to which it was subject as an intergovernmental forum functioning under the rules of procedure of the Economic and Social Council, and the impacts of this on the participation of major groups and other stakeholders.

5. The discussion highlighted the following areas of emerging convergence, among others:

(a) Conducting "business as usual" was not a viable option and would put the existence of the Forum at risk, particularly in a competitive institutional atmosphere and as the United Nations post-2015 arrangements took shape;

(b) The substance of the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests and the four global objectives on forests remained relevant and should be reaffirmed (whether the substance was legally binding or not); a few tweaks and updates may be needed, but there was no appetite for renegotiating the substance of the bulk of the provisions;

(c) The Forum could play a strong role in the post-2015 period with respect to the forest-related aspects of the sustainable development goals; the Forum could positon itself as the body to review the forest-related elements of the sustainable

development goals and to provide the outcomes of such a review to the high-level political forum on sustainable development;

(d) The Collaborative Partnership on Forests remained vital, was a good idea and was a needed coordination and catalysing institution, but there was scope for improving it;

(e) The Forum, through the arrangement, played an important role in coordinating and facilitating dialogue among United Nations and other international institutions dealing with forests, but because there was no hierarchal relationship between the Forum and other forest-related institutions and processes, the Forum could not control such institutions and processes, which had their own political mandates and governing bodies;

(f) The Forum needed a plan (whether a strategic plan or a multi-year programme of work or something else) to set out where it was going, why that was important to the wider world and how it was going to get there;

(g) Among the challenges on the ground was the key issue of financing; the focus was not only on mobilizing new and additional financial resources but also on improving access to such resources, making better use of existing funds and ensuring that resources were allocated to meet a complete range of forest needs (e.g. not just those of the enhanced mechanism for reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries (REDD+)) and that they were utilized effectively;

(h) The four options presented in the report on the independent assessment of the arrangement represented a useful summary of possible options and actions and provided a useful input for discussions, although the discussion should not be limited to those four options.

6. Areas on which different views were expressed included the following:

(a) The legal character of the arrangement after 2015 (the legally binding instrument question);

(b) The desirable degree of regionalization and the role of regional organizations and processes;

(c) The degree to which the Forum should focus on promoting, reviewing or actually implementing instead of focusing on policy dialogue and coordination;

(d) The types of concrete institutional changes that might be needed, including whether to establish the Forum as a United Nations forum assembly or as "UN-Forest", whether to appoint a special envoy and whether to set up financial mechanisms.

V. Non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests after 2015: proposed actions and options

7. Areas of emerging convergence during discussions on the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests included the following:

(a) The need to better promote and strengthen the visibility of the instrument and its global objectives on forests; this could include changing the title of the

instrument to a more dynamic one, which would send a more positive message, improve communication and facilitate wider understanding of the instrument;

(b) The need to update the instrument, including by replacing references to the Millennium Development Goals with references to the sustainable development goals and extending the time frame of the global objectives on forests to 2030, for example. Further updates to the text should be made with caution to avoid reopening negotiations on the substance of the text;

(c) A resolution, addendum to the instrument or the strategic plan could address forest-related developments since 2007, and also highlight the importance of cross-sectoral approaches in addressing deforestation and serve as a basis for intersectoral discussions;

(d) The need to establish a clear link between the instrument and the sustainable development goals and the post-2015 development agenda (including clear, time-bound targets) and to explore how to do that;

(e) A concise strategic plan or similar strategy could be a useful way to focus the work of the international arrangement on forests, set priorities (including low-cost and high-value actions) and increase visibility for the implementation of the instrument. Each country could develop its own strategy based on the global strategy.

8. Additional views and proposals put forward by experts included the following:

(a) Developing an addendum could be a useful way to address forest-related developments since 2007 (e.g. the sustainable development goals and the role of forests in the sustainable development agenda, REDD+ and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, among others);

(b) Ways of updating the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests other than through an addendum should be explored — for example, the instrument could be updated in the context of a strategic plan or Forum resolution;

(c) It would be useful to have a strategy or mechanism to scale up lessons learned and successes from the pilot implementation of the instrument, as well as to create guidelines on how to implement it;

(d) The four options put forward in the independent assessment report were a point of departure and constituted additional options — their elements did not form a package and could be considered individually;

(e) Options 1, 3 and 4 were not mutually exclusive and could be pursued in a mutually supporting way;

(f) If option 4 were considered, regional strategies, including legally binding commitments, could be encouraged under the umbrella of the instrument, which would build on existing agreements and conventions;

(g) There was a need to promote a common understanding of sustainable forest management, including among member organizations of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, as well as a global set of sustainable forest management indicators supported by all;

(h) The need for a practical mechanism to catalyse the implementation of the instrument, sustainable forest management and decisions of the Forum, including by

building and influencing political will, building capacity within countries and involving local and indigenous communities.

9. Differences remained on the issue of whether making the instrument legally binding would ultimately encourage the implementation of sustainable forest management on the ground.

VI. Implementation and financing of sustainable forest management after 2015: proposed actions and options

Financing of sustainable forest management after 2015

10. Areas of emerging convergence during discussions on the financing of sustainable forest management after 2015 included the following:

(a) The Forum should form closer ties with all existing financing mechanisms to promote coherence and to allow and improve access by countries to sources of funding for forests;

(b) Funding the institutional aspects of the international arrangement on forests was an issue separate from funding efforts to implement sustainable forest management on the ground — both should be strengthened under the arrangement in the future;

(c) The facilitative process, including its staffing capacity, could be strengthened, building on experiences to date and with a view to realizing its full potential as a catalytic mechanism;

(d) The facilitative process could advise and assist countries in developing short-, medium- and long-term financing strategies for implementing sustainable forest management, the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests and the global objectives on forests; accessing financing from a range of sources; attracting investment, including improving enabling environments; brokering funding and connecting with potential technical cooperation partners; overcoming financing obstacles; encouraging South-South, North-South and triangular cooperation; and encouraging the private sector to play a greater role in interconnected sectors;

(e) The Forum should encourage financing from all sources to strengthen capacity to support the implementation of the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests, in particular in developing countries and countries with economies in transition. Possible ways of attracting funding included creating a voluntary strategic trust fund or sub-accounts under the existing Forum Trust Fund. The Forum could create a voluntary strategic trust fund to strengthen capacity to support the implementation of the instrument through the facilitative process, for example by providing priority support for the development of national action plans for the implementation of the instrument, the preparation of national reports on the status of implementation and the mobilization of additional resources for the implementation of sustainable forest management, including the further development of forest *inventory baseline information, taking into account ongoing work in that area.*

11. Additional views and proposals put forward by experts included the following:

(a) There was scope for improving the management of the facilitative process, for example, through the definition of operating rules and through increased transparency in the process of setting priorities and in governance (e.g. a steering committee);

(b) In the future, the facilitative process should be a core function of the international arrangement on forests and the secretariat should have the capacity to fully manage a strengthened facilitative process;

(c) The facilitative process and the voluntary strategic trust fund, if established, should be flexible enough to accommodate contributions from a wide variety of sources, which may have different rules governing their contributions;

(d) There was a need to clarify the conditions that would enable Governments to attract investors (e.g. transparency, secure land tenure, stable economic policies, anti-corruption measures) and to recognize that the creation of those conditions had a cost;

(e) The facilitative process could be renamed to better convey and communicate its purpose and to attract interest;

(f) As there may be duplication in the functions of the facilitative process and the proposed strategic trust fund, the mechanisms could be merged or linked in some way;

(g) The proposed strategic trust fund could provide seed money to help countries develop project proposals for submission to existing funds;

(h) The feasibility of creating sub-accounts within the Forum Trust Fund for specific purposes (e.g. to support the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and the facilitative process, among others) should be explored since there may be some resistance within the United Nations to creating new trust funds;

(i) Trust funds could be used to strengthen the science-policy interface (through the Collaborative Partnership on Forests), as well as to strengthen the human and budgetary resources of the secretariat of the international arrangement on forests in the post-2015 period;

(j) A clear, results-based road map or strategy could be important for attracting forest-related financing from a variety of sources for the implementation of the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests, as well as for mobilizing resources for monitoring.

12. Experts continued to disagree strongly on the need for a dedicated global forest fund for the international arrangement on forests and the Forum.

Implementation of sustainable forest management after 2015

13. Areas of emerging convergence during discussions on the implementation of sustainable forest management after 2015 included the following:

(a) On monitoring, assessment and reporting, data-sharing arrangements should be established with partners of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, synergies should be explored and the reporting process should be synchronized with

the cycle of other relevant processes, such as the Global Forest Resources Assessment, for greater harmonization and to minimize the reporting burden;

(b) Consideration should be given to using resources from the Forum Trust Fund to support, inter alia, countries in preparing national reports and plans for the implementation of the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests;

(c) Capacity should be strengthened to support implementation at the national and regional levels and coordination on forest-related matters should be improved within Member States, across ministries and between departments, to deal with forests in a more coordinated, integrated and comprehensive manner.

14. Additional views and proposals on monitoring, assessment and reporting included:

(a) Efforts should be made to engage in the discussions on the post-2015 development agenda and to help develop measurable targets and associated indicators for the global objectives on forests and the sustainable development goals;

(b) Use should be made of an ad hoc expert group, a subsidiary implementation body or a partnership on global forest indicators under the Forum to review progress on the implementation of the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests after each reporting cycle;

(c) A streamlined standard reporting format should be established, with a core set of indicators and a time-bound programme of work focusing on specific aspects of the instrument, and sets of achievable and measurable actions linked to the Forum strategic plan should be identified;

(d) The capacity of Member States to gather the information needed to establish baseline levels for indicators against which to report should be strengthened;

(e) Efforts should be made to better understand and promote the potential role of the Forum in the process of monitoring and reviewing the sustainable development goals related to forests;

(f) Monitoring, assessment and reporting procedures should be used to assess the value added by the instrument and exchange experiences and success stories;

(g) The relationship between the resolutions and decisions of the Forum and the work of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests should be strengthened and there should be accountability on the implementation of those resolutions and decisions;

(h) The decisions on monitoring, assessment and reporting that need to be taken at the eleventh session of the Forum and those that can be taken at a later date should be identified.

VII. United Nations Forum on Forests after 2015

15. Areas of emerging convergence during discussions on the Forum after 2015 included the following:

(a) The current name of the Forum should be maintained, as should the principle of universal membership and the status of the Forum as a functional commission of the Economic and Social Council;

(b) The roles and functions of all components of the international arrangement on forests, including the Forum, its secretariat and the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, should be clarified, as should the roles and functions of the open-ended intergovernmental ad hoc expert groups and country-led initiatives;

(c) The functions of the arrangement could include the promotion of sustainable forest management, the implementation of the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests, including the global objectives on forests, and the integration of forest-related issues into the sustainable development goals;

(d) Policy dialogue and development should continue to be a key function of the Forum;

(e) The Forum should have a specific role vis-à-vis other intergovernmental bodies and interact with those bodies on an equal footing;

(f) The arrangement needed to be cost effective, add value, avoid duplication and promote coherence;

(g) The functions of the Forum needed to be streamlined and better focused;

(h) The Forum should develop a strategy on how to add value, strengthen links and seek synergies with other processes in order to engage actors operating across sectors, within the United Nations system and in setting the development agenda;

(i) In the future, the international arrangement on forests should place forests firmly within the post-2015 development agenda, strengthen links with the high-level political forum on sustainable development and use the sustainable development goals to build bridges with other treaties and processes;

(j) The Forum needed to have the power to respond, deliver and guide, and to reach out to other forest-related processes, agreements and conventions. It also needed to be more action-oriented and attractive to non-governmental actors, including the private sector;

(k) Greater and more creative use should be made of intersessional mechanisms, including, possibly, subsidiary bodies, informal bodies (e.g. working groups, expert groups, task forces and friends of the chairs) and virtual groups, to make progress.

16. Areas of emerging convergence during discussions on the Forum secretariat after 2015 included the following:

(a) The Forum needed a strengthened secretariat;

(b) The secretariat needed adequate financial and human resources, commensurate with the functions assigned to it by the Forum;

(c) The main purpose of the secretariat with regard to the Forum was to support the intergovernmental process. In the future, other functions would flow from the functions of the Forum and decisions taken at its eleventh session related to, for example, financial mechanisms (for example, the facilitative process, the

Forum Trust Fund, the strategic trust fund and the global forest fund) and the Collaborative Partnership on Forests;

(d) The Forum should set clear priorities for the secretariat to ensure that tasks were commensurate with resources. This could be done through a workplan that identified priority actions.

17. Additional proposals put forward by experts included the following:

(a) While the original functions of the Forum should be maintained, the following two central functions proposed in the independent assessment report should also be considered: providing high-level leadership in order to secure effective stewardship of forests within the global sustainable development agenda; and promoting and facilitating the sustainable management of all types of forests;

(b) Options should be explored to raise the profile of the Forum and to encourage participation at the highest political level, including by Heads of State;

(c) A flexible strategy or strategic plan should be developed to guide the work of the Forum;

(d) The role and functioning of the Forum's Bureau should be improved and greater use should be made of the Bureau to facilitate the work of, and provide feedback to, the secretariat;

(e) The Forum should provide a platform for exchanging experiences and lessons learned (e.g. through voluntary peer reviews of countries' efforts) and might also provide a clearinghouse mechanism for facilitating sustainable forest management (e.g. for facilitative process projects);

(f) There should be a position in the secretariat dedicated to supporting activities related to monitoring, assessment and reporting;

(g) The secretariat should develop a communications strategy targeted at promoting sustainable forest management to the most important constituencies, in collaboration with the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and the Major Groups Partnership on Forests;

(h) Greater transparency and accountability in Secretariat operations was needed, including regarding the use of the Forum Trust Fund;

(i) Greater technical capacity within the secretariat would be useful;

(j) Available resourcing options and secondment arrangements should be considered as ways to strengthen the secretariat;

(k) Virtual secondments (e.g. involving 25-50 per cent of a person's time) could be a cost-effective way to supplement the secretariat's capacity, including its technical capacity;

(l) The proposal of the independent assessment team for a United Nations forest assembly implied not just a change in name; it captured the potential for strengthening the Forum by including key non-governmental actors in high-level segments and involving major groups and regional mechanisms to a greater degree;

(m) The interface of policy and science, research and practice, was an area where the Forum could forge a very useful role, working with the Collaborative Partnership on Forests.

18. Differences of opinion remained with regard to the role of the Forum in implementation and the difference between project facilitation and project implementation, for example.

VIII. Collaborative Partnership on Forests after 2015

19. Areas of emerging convergence during discussions on the Collaborative Partnership on Forests after 2015 included the following:

(a) Strengthening international cooperation on forests was one of the main pillars of the post-2015 international arrangement on forests. The Partnership was an important component of the arrangement and should continue to exist, in a strengthened format;

(b) The Partnership's voluntary nature enabled it to remain flexible while receiving overall guidance from the Forum, and should be retained;

(c) With regard to the links between the Forum and the Partnership: the role of the Partnership within the arrangement and its relationship to the Forum should be clarified; basic guidelines on its method of work and operation should be established; responsibilities, expertise, gaps, common expectations and division of labour, including for the Forum secretariat, should be clarified;

(d) A strategy and costed workplan for the Partnership, which would provide a basis for setting priorities and clarity to eventual donors, should be developed.

20. Additional views and proposals put forward by experts included the following:

(a) The science-policy interface should be strengthened in order to enable the kind of systematic interaction that took into account the overall role of forests in sustainable development and that linked policy to the latest scientific results and assessments; in that regard, science and research-related members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, such as the Centre for International Forestry Research, the International Council for Research in Agroforestry and the International Union of Forest Research Organizations, may play an important role;

(b) The Partnership should be formalized further, including through a General Assembly resolution or multilateral and bilateral memorandums of understanding among Partnership members that reflect the Partnership mandate, priorities, procedures for increasing or decreasing membership, and that include information on chairmanship and co-chairmanship arrangements;

(c) A strategic plan for the Partnership should be developed that is consistent with the overall strategic plan of the international arrangement on forests and the Forum and that focuses on the implementation of the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests, the global objectives on forests and the sustainable development goals;

(d) There should be more transparency in the work and structure of the Partnership so that all parties, including Member States, could have a better understanding of it, including with regard to how its outputs linked to Forum decisions and resolutions;

(e) There should be a position in the Forum secretariat dedicated to supporting the Partnership secretariat.

IX. Involvement of major groups after 2015

21. Areas of emerging convergence during discussions on the involvement of major groups after 2015 included the following:

(a) The multi-stakeholder nature of the Forum should be maintained and the broad and active participation of all stakeholders should be strengthened, as it was fundamental for the successful promotion of sustainable forest management;

(b) Ways should be found to enhance the participation of major groups in Forum sessions and in intersessional activities, as well as their contributions to the international arrangement on forests;

(c) Major groups' participation in regional groups should be promoted, recognizing the value of the joint work done by major and regional groups and their contribution to sustainable forest management on the ground.

22. Additional views and proposals put forward by experts included the following:

(a) Collaboration between Governments and major groups at the national level should be encouraged, including by allowing major groups to be represented in the official delegations to Forum meetings;

(b) Business and industry participation should be encouraged by raising the profile of the Forum in the private sector, including through joint activities and the Major Groups Partnership on Forests;

(c) The establishment of thematic task forces or an advisory group should be considered, as additional mechanisms for strengthening stakeholder engagement;

(d) The holding of interactive sessions with both civil society and the private sector should be considered and partnerships with other stakeholders, including international environment and development non-governmental organizations, should be built;

(e) The establishment of a cooperation and collaboration mechanism between the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and the Major Groups Partnership on Forests should be considered;

(f) Sufficient resources should be provided to major groups and the Major Groups Partnership on Forests to enable them to participate effectively in the Forum process, including in the implementation of the international arrangement on forests at the national, regional and global levels.

X. Involvement of regional entities after 2015

23. Areas of emerging convergence during discussions on the involvement of regional entities after 2015 included the following:

(a) A framework should be provided to encourage closer linkages between regional, subregional and thematic organizations and processes (such as those for small island developing States and low-forest-cover countries) and global forest policy processes responsible for policy dialogue at the global level, recognizing that regional, subregional and thematic organizations and mechanisms could help to share information about the Forum and to channel information from regions to the

Forum and that rules of procedure may allow greater stakeholder involvement in meetings at the regional, subregional and thematic levels;

(b) The facilitative process, which had proved to be important for strengthening and advancing regional cooperation in the critical areas of forest financing, including mobilization, and access to funding, in particular with regard to thematic and regional groups (such as those for small island developing States, low-forest-cover countries, African countries and the least developed countries), could be strengthened further;

(c) The roles of regional and thematic processes, including with regard to the modalities for providing input to the Forum, should be clarified.

24. Additional views and proposals put forward by experts included the following:

(a) The engagement of regional and thematic bodies and processes in the facilitative process, a platform for regional and thematic cooperation, should be strengthened;

(b) The linkages with existing subregional, regional and thematic bodies and processes, including the regional commissions of the United Nations and the regional forestry commissions of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), should also be strengthened.

XI. Elements and components for inclusion in the resolution on the future of the international arrangement on forests to be adopted by the Forum at its eleventh session

25. Experts discussed the elements and components for inclusion in the resolution on the future of the international arrangement on forests to be adopted by the Forum at its eleventh session, stressing, however, that the draft text should not prejudge negotiations during the session. They also discussed whether the resolution should update Economic and Social Council resolutions 2000/35 and 2006/49 or supersede them.

26. Experts suggested that the preambular part of the resolution should include:

(a) A statement of the "problem" (such as the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation);

(b) A positive narrative on the role of sustainable forest management, the potential role of the international arrangement on forests in relation to the sustainable development goals and the post-2015 development agenda, and the importance of cross-sectoral engagement;

(c) The benefits of allowing universal membership in the Forum;

(d) The need for the arrangement to be cost effective, add value, avoid duplication and promote policy coherence;

(e) The importance of implementing the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests and of highlighting the role played by various components of the arrangement in such implementation;

(f) A reference to the report on the independent assessment of the arrangement.

27. Experts also suggested that the operative paragraphs of the resolution should:

(a) Set out the overall rationale for the international arrangement on forests, including its objectives, purpose and functions;

(b) Set out the future components of the arrangement, clarifying their roles, functions and working modalities, including with regard to the frequency of their meetings, and clarifying also the role of the Forum with respect to implementation and political dialogue;

(c) Highlight the need for clear references to the importance of capacity-building, technology transfer and other means of implementation;

(d) Include a reference to a global forest fund, which is different from the proposed strategic trust fund;[c]

(e) Highlight the need to make clear that contributions to the strategic trust fund would be voluntary;

(f) Highlight the need for a more prominent reference to the sustainable development goals, including to those sustainable development goals and targets that do not refer explicitly to forests;

(g) Highlight the need to address the importance of strengthening cross-sectoral linkages;

(h) Highlight the need to raise the profile of the Forum with respect to other processes, conventions and instruments dealing with forest-related matters;

(i) Highlight the need for a mechanism to address emerging issues;

(j) Highlight the need for a road map that sets out the process to be undertaken between the holding of the eleventh session of the Forum and the implementation of the international arrangement on forests in the period beyond 2015, as the strategic plan may not have been completed in the time for the eleventh session;

(k) Highlight the need to retain all options discussed at the first meeting of the Open-ended Intergovernmental Ad Hoc Expert Group and at the country-led initiative held in Beijing, as well as the independent assessment report, including the option of establishing an entity to be known as "UN-Forests" and the options of establishing legally binding and non-legally binding agreements;

(l) Highlight the need, at this stage, to describe components of the international arrangement on forests using neutral language (e.g. "inter-agency collaboration mechanisms"), although some experts said that it was important not to lose the specific reference to the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, given its good reputation;

(m) Address the question of how detailed the resolution should be and what should be left for later negotiation;

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[c] Experts were reminded of the proposals presented by the Group of 77 and China to the Forum, at its eighth session, on a global forest fund (see www.un.org/esa/forests/pdf/session_documents/unff8/G77_Global_Fund.pdf).

(n) Regarding the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and its relationship with the Forum, address the questions of whether Chairs should serve on a rotating basis (some experts stated that this would improve transparency, others that it would reduce effectiveness) and of whether there was a need to develop a workplan for the Partnership and undertake a dialogue with the Forum regarding deliverables;

(o) Highlight the need to recognize the programme budget implications of proposals;

(p) Highlight the need for components of the international arrangement on forests, including the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, to engage with regional and subregional entities, including the regional commissions of the United Nations and the regional forestry commissions of FAO;

(q) Highlight the need to strengthen major groups engagement, including by recognizing the Major Groups Partnership on Forests, providing more time for the multi-stakeholder dialogue at Forum sessions, providing adequate resources for major groups engagement at the national, regional and global levels, and introducing independent accreditation for major groups participating in Forum activities.

28. Given the important distinction between the roles and cost implications of possible intersessional mechanisms, such as working groups, ad hoc expert groups and subsidiary bodies, the secretariat was requested to prepare an information note on this matter for consideration at the eleventh session of the Forum.

XII. Recommendations of the Co-Chairs on the future of the international arrangement on forests

29. In accordance with the mandate given to the Open-ended Intergovernmental Ad Hoc Expert Group on the International Arrangement on Forests, the Co-Chairs of the second meeting proposed a set of recommendations providing strategic direction on the function and institutional arrangements of the arrangement for the period beyond 2015. The Co-Chairs invited the Bureau of the eleventh session of the Forum to consider the best ways and means to conduct informal consultations between the second meeting of the Expert Group and the eleventh session, building on the elements and components below, which were proposed by the Co-Chairs for inclusion in the resolution on the future of the arrangement.

Preambular section

30. The Co-Chairs suggested:

(a) Acknowledging the contributions of the international arrangement on forests, including lessons learned and shortcomings;

(b) Stressing the significance of maintaining universal membership in the Forum, in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 2000/35;

(c) Emphasizing the need for a strengthened international arrangement on forests in the period beyond 2015, building on the achievements made by the arrangement to date and taking measures to strengthen it, in particular in areas related to advancing implementation and mobilizing financing for sustainable forest

management and the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests, including the facilitative process, promoting synergy, coordination and collaboration on forests at all levels and providing guidance on cooperation among forest-related organizations;

(d) Acknowledging the developments and policy decisions concerning forests taken in other forest-related forums, including the secretariats of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa;

(e) Stressing the critical significance of positioning and integrating the arrangement in the broader context of the post-2015 development agenda, in particular with regard to achieving forest-related sustainable development goals and targets;

(f) Emphasizing that the arrangement should work to promote cooperation and add value by continuing to be a body with universal membership and to hold policy dialogues on the multifunctional role of forests and all issues related to all types of forests.

Operative section

31. The resolution should include information on:

(a) The rationale, objective, core functions and principles that should be followed;

(b) The core components of the arrangement (Member States; the Forum, its Bureau, its secretariat, the Forum Trust Fund and the facilitative process; the Collaborative Partnership on Forests; regional and subregional organizations and processes; major groups; the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests; and the post-2015 strategic plan for the arrangement), as well as their objectives, functions, roles and responsibilities;

(c) Strengthening the arrangement, for example by:

(i) Reaffirming the principle of universal membership, the composition and the headquarters of the Forum, as agreed in Economic and Social Council resolution 2000/35;

(ii) Defining the working modalities of the Forum, including through the restructuring of its sessions to enhance its efficiency and impact;

Means of implementation

(iii) Establishing an effective mechanism (for example, subsidiary bodies, committees and virtual groups on the implementation and/or financing of sustainable forest management) that would meet between sessions to advance the work of the Forum in those areas;

(iv) Establishing a voluntary strategic trust fund under the Forum, or a sub-account of the Forum Trust Fund, to be guided by a steering committee or executive body, to advance implementation of sustainable forest management

and the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests, in particular through the Forum's facilitative process, to assist countries in areas such as:

a. Capacity-building and transfer of technology under mutually agreed-upon terms;

b. Development of financing strategies for sustainable forest management, as well as national action plans for the implementation of the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests and the preparation of relevant national reports on progress in implementation;

c. Mobilization of financial resources, including by designing programmes and projects to facilitate access to existing funds;

d. Advancing collaboration among regional and thematic groups of countries (such as small island developing States, low-forest-cover countries and African countries) in accessing financing for sustainable forest management;

(v) Consideration of other options, such as the establishment of a global forest fund to support developing countries by providing them with new and additional financial resources in order to achieve the four global objectives on forests, promote sustainable forest management and implement the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests;

Non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests

(vi) With regard to the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests, the resolution should include, either through an addendum or other relevant means, an agreement on updating the instrument in terms of its title, changing the references to Millennium Development Goals to sustainable development goals, extending the time frame of the global objectives on forests to 2030, integrating forest-related sustainable development goals and targets, the global objectives on forests and the role of the Forum in monitoring, assessing and reporting on those goals and targets, and reflecting on other forest-related developments that have taken place since 2007;

Secretariat

(vii) Strengthening the human and financial resources of the Forum secretariat, ensuring that they are commensurate with its defined functions;

Collaborative Partnership on Forests

(viii) Strengthening the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, including by providing specific guidance on its future workplan, ensuring consistency with the Forum's priorities and future strategic plan and providing adequate funding;

Regional cooperation

(ix) Using regional "criteria and indicators" processes as tools for the implementation of Forum decisions and the strategic plan for the arrangement;

(x) Strengthening cooperation between the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and regional entities, including the regional commissions of the United Nations, with the Forum;

Major groups

(xi) Supporting the greater involvement of major groups and their coordinating networks by offering adequate opportunities for active participation in Forum activities in the future and devoting the resources required for their involvement;

Post-2015 development agenda and major processes

(xii) Ensuring coherence with the post-2015 development agenda and the sustainable development goals, including by ensuring that the Forum is the body that will report on the implementation of forest-related sustainable development goals and targets to the high-level political forum on sustainable development, including on the best ways and means to achieve them;

(xiii) Advancing coordination and collaboration with other forest-related processes in respect of the Global Environment Facility, the Green Climate Fund, REDD+ and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets;

(xiv) Strengthening monitoring, assessment and reporting through data-sharing arrangements and by synchronizing the reporting process with the forest resources assessment and relevant "criteria and indicators" processes, among others);

Post-2015 strategic plan for the international arrangement on forests

(xv) Developing a strategic plan for the arrangement (the overall time horizon being 2030, with periodic reviews in between) that includes a time-bound programme of work focusing on priority actions that are achievable on the short term (2-3 years), with required resources, as well as agreed roles and responsibilities of core components of the arrangement;

(d) Following up on the outcomes of the eleventh session of the Forum through the following measures:

(i) Establishing a working group of the Forum to reach agreement on and propose, inter alia:

a. An updated non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests;

b. A strategic plan for the arrangement, and the modalities and operational rules of the strategic trust fund and the facilitative process;

c. A framework for interaction between the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and the Forum, and possible organizational matters related to future Forum sessions;

(ii) Submitting the agreed outcome of the working group to the Forum at a special session in 2016. The work of this working group could be facilitated by a Bureau-designated task force charged with preparing initial proposals on the elements set out in subparagraph (d (i)) above for consideration by the working group.